I. Introduction

Imagine a simple room with a table, a single marshmallow, and a group of four-year-old children. In a famous study from the 1960s and 1970s known as the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment, researchers offered each child a choice: eat the one marshmallow right now or wait about 15 minutes while the researcher stepped out and then receive two marshmallows. Some kids ate the treat immediately. Others found creative ways to wait, singing songs or turning away from the temptation. Years later, when researchers followed up with the same children as teenagers and adults, the results were striking. Those who had waited showed better long-term outcomes in almost every area of life. They earned higher scores on standardized tests, achieved greater educational success, maintained healthier weights, formed stronger relationships, and even demonstrated more self-control in stressful situations. The ability to delay gratification, it turned out, predicted a brighter future far more reliably than many other early indicators.

That experiment points to a powerful truth about patience. In our fast-paced world of instant downloads, same-day delivery, and quick-fix solutions, the idea of waiting feels outdated or even frustrating. Yet the Bible presents patience not as a weakness but as one of the most important fruits that the Holy Spirit actively grows in the lives of those who follow Jesus. Listen to what Scripture says in Galatians chapter 5, verses 22 and 23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Notice that patience sits right in the middle of this list. It is not something we can manufacture on our own through sheer willpower. It is supernatural fruit, produced by the Holy Spirit as He works in us over time.

Today we will trace God’s refining process in the lives of David and Joseph. We will look at who they were before their trials and the character flaws that needed to be removed, how the refining weeded out those flaws while developing positive traits through the fruit of patience, who they became as a result, and who they possibly would have been without God’s patient work. These stories show us that God uses trials not to punish us but to transform us into people who can lead faithfully and responsibly.

Let us begin by meeting David and Joseph before their refining journeys began.

II. Main Point One: Before the Trials – Who They Were and Their Character Flaws

Let us begin by meeting David and Joseph before their refining journeys began, when their character flaws were still very much present and needed to

be addressed.

First, consider David. David was a teenage shepherd boy when God dramatically stepped into his life. The prophet Samuel was sent by God to anoint the next king of Israel. In 1 Samuel chapter 16, verses 11 through 13, “Then Samuel asked, ‘Are these all the sons you have?’ Jesse replied, ‘There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep.’ Samuel said, ‘Send for him, we will not sit down until he arrives.’ So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the Lord said, ‘Rise and anoint him, this is the one.’ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David.”

Not long afterward, David faced the giant Goliath and defeated him with a sling and a stone in front of the entire Israelite army. At this early stage, David was gifted, courageous, and clearly favored by God. However, these early blessings also carried natural character flaws. He had the potential for entitlement, feeling he deserved quick promotion because of his anointing and public victory. There was also the risk of pride taking root because of his special status and self-reliance, trusting in his own abilities rather than waiting on God’s timing.

Now let us look at Joseph. Joseph was seventeen years old when we first meet him in Genesis chapter 37. He was the favored son of his father Jacob, who loved him more than all his other children and gave him a beautiful ornate tunic. God also gave Joseph two prophetic dreams that showed one day his entire family would bow down to him. Instead of keeping those dreams to himself or sharing them humbly, Joseph told his brothers about them openly. This revealed his character flaws at that time. He was naive and boastful, lacking wisdom in how he spoke. Pride in his favored position and future calling made him tactless and impulsive with his words. His brothers’ jealousy grew so strong that they eventually sold him into slavery in Egypt.

Both David and Joseph had incredible potential and clear callings from God. Yet before their trials, they also carried serious character flaws that could have ruined their futures and their ability to lead well. This is why the Holy Spirit’s work of growing patience through refining is so important. God does not leave us as we are. He uses seasons of waiting and difficulty to address what needs to change in us.

Now we will see how God used the refining process to weed out these flaws and develop beautiful positive character traits in both men.

III. Main Point Two: The Refining Process – Weeding Out Flaws and Developing

Positive Character Traits

Now that we have seen who David and Joseph were before their trials, let us examine how God used the refining process to weed out those flaws and develop positive character traits through the fruit of patience.

Consider David first. After his anointing and victory over Goliath, David entered a long season of about thirteen to fifteen years of waiting and hardship. Once King Saul saw David as a rival and the fulfillment of God's promise to take away his kingdom and give it to someone else, he grew jealous and hunted him relentlessly. David lived as a fugitive in caves and wilderness areas, leading a growing band of distressed men who gathered around him. In this crucible the Holy Spirit began His refining work. The potential for entitlement and pride was weeded out as David learned that God's promises do not come on our own timetable. He could have seized the throne by force many times, yet he refused. Instead he waited on the Lord. Self-reliance was removed when David faced moments of deep distress, such as when his own men talked of stoning him. In 1 Samuel chapter 30, verse 6 we read, "David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him. Each was bitter in spirit because of his family. But David found strength in the Lord his God." Vengefulness was also pruned away. Twice David had the perfect opportunity to kill Saul, but he chose mercy. In 1 Samuel chapter 24, verse 10 he explained, "This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, 'I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the Lord's anointed.'"

As those harmful traits were removed, positive character traits grew in their place. Radical humility and dependence on God replaced pride. Patient, transformative leadership developed as David turned that group of four hundred outcasts into a loyal and disciplined force. Emotional resilience expressed through honest worship also took root. In the caves David poured out his heart to God and turned his pain into praise, showing a man who processed fear by drawing near to the Lord rather than growing bitter.

The refining process worked in much the same way in Joseph's life. After his brothers sold him into slavery, Joseph spent many years facing false accusation, demotion, and imprisonment. He was thrown into Potiphar's house, then into prison for a crime he did not commit. These years systematically weeded out his earlier flaws. The pride and boastfulness that made him tactless with his dreams were stripped away through repeated humbling experiences. Bitterness and resentment toward his brothers and his captors had no room to grow because Joseph kept choosing faithfulness. Self-pity and impulsiveness were also removed as he learned to serve others even

when his own circumstances were unjust.

In their place, strong positive traits emerged through the patient work of the Holy Spirit. Profound humility and God-centeredness replaced pride. When Pharaoh later called on him to interpret dreams, Joseph made it clear that the ability came from God alone. Unwavering integrity and moral resolve grew strong. Even in Potiphar's house, when faced with temptation, Joseph refused to sin. Forgiving leadership and a sovereign perspective also developed, along with administrative excellence born from endurance. Joseph learned to manage people and resources faithfully in the lowest places, preparing him to do so with wisdom when promotion finally came.

In both lives we see the same pattern. The refining process is where the Holy Spirit grows the fruit of patience. It does not happen overnight or in comfort. It happens in the long wait, the unjust suffering, and the hidden faithfulness. God uses these seasons to pull out what would have destroyed David and Joseph and to plant what would make them effective leaders after His own heart. The same process is at work in our lives today. Your current season of waiting or difficulty is not wasted. It is the very soil where the Holy Spirit is weeding out harmful traits and growing the positive character that will last.

Now we will see the positive outcome of this refining, who David and Joseph became as a result, and who they possibly would have been without God's patient work.

IV. Main Point Three: The Outcome – Who They Became and Who They Might Have Been Without Refinement

Now that we have seen the refining process at work, let us look at the purified outcome. After God weeded out the harmful flaws and developed positive character traits through the fruit of patience, David and Joseph emerged as transformed leaders who reflected God's own heart. We will also consider who they possibly would have been without this patient work of the Holy Spirit.

First, consider who David became. The teenage shepherd who once carried the potential for entitlement grew into a king marked by radical humility and dependence on God. Instead of demanding the throne, he responded to God's covenant promise with awe and gratitude. God Himself described him in Acts chapter 13, verse 22, "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart, he will do everything I want him to do." David ruled with merciful restraint, uniting the people of Israel rather than dividing them through revenge. He led with patient, transformative leadership and expressed deep emotional resilience through worship that still encourages believers today. His reign established a legacy of covenant blessing that pointed forward to the

coming Messiah.

Joseph's transformation was equally robust. The boastful seventeen-year-old became a wise and forgiving ruler who saved entire nations from famine. When his brothers stood before him in Egypt, Joseph responded with complete mercy and a sovereign perspective. In Genesis chapter 50, verse 20 he told them, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." He provided for his family, reconciled broken relationships, and led with humility and administrative excellence that brought security and blessing to his people.

These outcomes show the power of patience as a fruit of the Spirit. The long seasons of waiting and suffering did not destroy David and Joseph. They prepared them to lead with God's character and to bless others in ways that echoed into eternity.

Yet it is worth pausing to consider who they possibly would have been without the refining process. Without those years of hardship and patient dependence on God, David might have become an entitled and vengeful king. He could have seized power by force the first chance he had, relying on his own strength and popularity. Pride and self-reliance might have turned him into a ruler much like Saul, leading to division, disobedience, and spiritual decline for the nation. Joseph, without the refining, might have become a proud and bitter ruler. The same pride that made him tactless with his dreams could have hardened into arrogance once he gained power. Resentment from betrayal might have led him to exact revenge on his brothers instead of forgiving them. He could have saved Egypt from famine but left a legacy of broken relationships and a heart far from God's redemptive purposes.
The contrast is striking. Without the refining, their natural flaws would have limited their impact and possibly led to failure. With it, they became humble, merciful leaders whose lives produced blessing for generations. This is the mercy of God at work. He does not leave us as we are. He uses the fruit of patience to transform us into people who can handle His calling without being destroyed by our own weaknesses.

As we come to the close of our message, let us consider what this means for our own lives today.

V. Conclusion
As we come to the close of our message today, let us bring together everything we have seen in the lives of David and Joseph. We began by looking at who they were before their trials, young men with great potential but also significant character flaws such as pride, entitlement, and impulsiveness. We then examined the refining process where God used long

seasons of waiting, suffering, and hardship to weed out those harmful traits and develop beautiful positive character traits through the fruit of patience. Finally, we saw the powerful outcome, who they became as transformed leaders after God's own heart, and the sobering reality of who they possibly would have been without the refining.

The stories of David and Joseph show us that God's refining fire is not meant to destroy us but to transform us. The patience the Holy Spirit grows in the waiting and the trials removes what would limit us and builds what equips us to lead with humility, mercy, and redemptive love.

Here is my challenge to you this week. First, identify one current area of waiting or difficulty in your life and ask the Holy Spirit to use it for your growth. Second, ask God to show you one character flaw He wants to weed out and one positive trait He wants to develop in you. Third, choose to respond to someone with patience and mercy this week, even if it is difficult.

Remember that Jesus is our ultimate example of patience. He willingly endured years of hidden preparation and intense testing so that He could become our Savior. Through His work on the cross, He makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to do this same transforming work in us.

Let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, thank You for the examples of David and Joseph. Thank You that You do not leave us as we are. Produce the fruit of patience in our lives. Weed out what does not honor You and grow in us the character of Christ. Give us grace to trust You in every season of waiting and trial. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

And now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, according to Romans chapter 15, verse 5. Go forth in the patience and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.